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ABSTRACT

Two English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers looked at parent involvement and cultural traits of Hispanics to better incorporate local Hispanic families into their school system. The project took place at Chamberlain Elementary School in Goshen, Indiana, in 1998-99. The school enrolls about 314 students, of whom approximately 94 are from Spanish-dominant homes. Case studies of four ESL students illustrate certain themes: low proficiency in both English and Spanish, rebellion against traditional female roles, use of curanderas (traditional healers), importance of knowing students' family situations, and family support of academic success. A literature review focused on the process of acculturation, Hispanic parent involvement in the education process, and education in Mexico. Project surveys asked parents about their educational experiences, their home activities, and their communications with the school, and asked ESL students to write a paragraph explaining how they were able to succeed in school. The project helped teachers to understand reasons for some discouraging student behaviors and to avoid assumptions regarding parents' English language proficiency. Teachers came to realize that cultural differences affect the ways in which students and parents react to the school system. Teachers were encouraged by the fact that many parents face difficulties, yet still support their children's education. Contains 48 references, the parent survey, and figures. (CDS)

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Hispanic Families In Our School: Knowing the Roots of Our Growing Branches

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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ABSTRACT

Research Topic:
Hispanic Families in Our School:
Knowing the Roots of our Growing Branches

Our team wanted to find answers to these questions:
--If parent involvement helps improve a child's educational success, how can we better incorporate our Hispanic families?
--What are some cultural traits of Hispanics that would be helpful to know when relating to our Hispanic families?

The methods used to research our topic included parent surveys, high school student surveys, colleague, parental and student interviews, an extensive literature search, and school statistical information.

Our research found strategies to help incorporate our Hispanic families in their children's school. Research shows that this may help improve the child's success in school and commitment to education. We have suggested several treatments and hope to implement them next school year.

An important aspect of our report was to include background information on the acculturation process that some of our families are experiencing. It is hoped that if the staff reads this they will be more understanding of the positive role they can play in our diverse community.

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April 1999

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I.
Introduction

Chamberlain Elementary School in Goshen, Indiana has an enrollment of about 314 students of which approximately 94 students are from Spanish-dominant homes and are considered to be language minority students. As English as a Second Language teachers for many of these students, we wanted to perfect our program by exploring how our students could have better success in school. We discussed many areas of concern until we felt the need to finally document these concerns and look into how we could address these obstacles that we saw our students and their families experiencing.

Our project encompasses cultural as well as socio-economical considerations involved in servicing these children. This paper includes examples of students and scenarios we incur. In Part II. A., we cover research on the process of acculturation with an emphasis on children and the school staff and community's role in this process. Part II.B. looks into Hispanic parent involvement in the education process and gives suggestions for schools to encourage the bond with our Spanish-speaking parents. We also include treatments and surveys we did to help create a bridge with our Hispanic families. We want them to feel a part of our school and to find success for their children.

We started this project in the Fall of 1998 and finished it in April of 1999. Plans are to incorporate our treatments for the 1999-2000 school year, and to deliver awareness by presenting our project to several audiences in April and May 1999. The written project will be available on disc in all principal offices of Goshen Community Schools for staff use.

In this paper, we refer to our families as "Hispanic" which is a generalized label that incorporates all persons that speak Spanish. We could have been more specific by saying "Mexican" since all but one of our current ESL students is from Mexico. Some people prefer "Latino" which means persons coming from Latin America. It is our decision to use "Hispanic" most of the time as much of the research we found uses this term and it seems acceptable.

We must also mention that many of the statements here can be classified as generalizations which may not be attributable to each unique child's situation. May we recommend reading the material for awareness purposes with the understanding that not all families, with their varied personalities and situations, fit into stereotypes. Said in another way, approach with an attitude that there is individual diversity within groups of people (e.g. Axelson, 1999, p. 220).

I.A.
Case Studies: A Personal Look at Our School

The following case studies are loosely based upon actual scenarios we experienced in our jobs as ESL teachers and are included here in the introduction to give examples of students with whom we have worked. Names and other identifying factors have been changed.

Pablo's Themes: "Non-non", volunteers, parent's experience with IEP process

A predicament that has been affecting more children of Mexican parents in the United States is the "non-non" diagnosis. This term, used by the Los Angeles Unified School District, describes children that are nonverbal in both English and Spanish. Pyle (1996) reports this severe communication problem can be blamed on a combination of problems: family illiteracy, poor prenatal care, malnutrition, neglect, and sometimes abuse.

Pablo was brought to our attention in kindergarten because he wasn't catching on as quickly as the other non-English speakers. He wouldn't initiate conversation in either language with bilingual staff. He also showed little affect and was incredibly well-behaved (almost too good for a boy his age!) Upon entering first grade and showing no improvement in speech or writing, he was taken to a "strategies" meeting. Many people ended up being involved: special education teachers, a speech and hearing professional, an occupational therapist, a school nurse, the principal, two classroom teachers, a school psychologist, the school's counselor and two ESL teachers. His hearing was tested, an ophthalmologist's fees were donated, language and intelligence tests were given. All exams required the parent's signature. To get this signature we had to translate the forms and send them home with the student. We were unsuccessful in getting them back and thought perhaps the mother didn't receive them or could not read (which was the case). A home visit was made by the ESL teacher. The mother was working from 6:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. every day so the visit had to be done on the weekend or in the evening. Finally, the parent was contacted and forms signed. We had considered highlighting the area to sign for the parent but a signature without comprehending what the written word was would be wrong. All future communication was then given verbally.

The parent was subjected to several repetitive questionnaires that delved into the prenatal and birthing conditions and personal questions about home life and the child's behavior. One example of a question on the forms asked if there were any traumatic experiences in Pablo's life. The staff involved with Pablo thought his life experiences were traumatic; for example, he had moved five times in the past year, he was the eldest child of a working single mother of four children, he had no relationship with a father-figure, and he had immigrated to a new culture. The mother denied any stresses or abnormal behaviors in the child's life when asked in

intake interviews . . . until a personal relationship with the bilingual, culturally-aware ESL teacher was established.

As attendance for the strategies meetings reached an all-time high, we were wondering how the mother of this child felt attending such formal meetings. We encouraged her to bring a friend along for moral support. She took off work and appeared with all her children and sat at the end of the table with the same school-provided translator. Facing her were ten college-educated Anglos telling her that her child had learning difficulties. We had assumed she felt intimidated, but at a post-meeting interview she said she was happy so many people were helping her son whom she knew was "slow".

At a later meeting another specialist had to interview the mother at home. The same translator attended this meeting. After the specialist left her home and the translator was still preparing to leave, the mother provided previously unmentioned information that was helpful to the case. It seems the established relationship of trust provided this opportunity. The confidential details given may have been what affected his problems in speaking and learning although his intelligence was normal.

Pablo has been exhibiting happiness and is opening up more in school, although he is still way behind his peers in language development, he is improving. Two local college tutors were found to read to him and engage him in conversation for a total of three days a week after school. They walk him home rather than drive due to liability concerns. The mother is unable to pick him up after tutoring as she doesn't drive and is expecting her fifth child.

The mother's attendance at the meetings and warmness toward her children showed us that she cares about them, yet we cannot expect her to have the time or to develop the literacy to read to her children. Hopefully Pablo will remain with us for his elementary years as much time and planning has gone into providing a special program for him, but we know we may hear at any time the disappointing news that they have moved.

Luisa's Theme- gangs, traditional female roles

Luisa had academic problems and was a third-year participant in our ESL program. She was a lively 10-year-old. During a two week period she had been absent several times; we had assumed she was sick, as that is what she told us when she came back to school. Luisa's grandmother came to the school with a different scenario: Luisa had been hanging out with older boys that may have been affiliated with a gang. We had thought little of the bandana she was wearing, after all, she was only ten. This incident brought us into a new awareness as the police informed us children her age are used for gang look-outs, unsuspecting weapon carriers and sexual objects. A caring team of school personnel went into action to see how they could sway her toward other activities.

Luisa proclaimed she was bored at home. She lived with her non-English speaking immigrant grandparents that believed girls should stay at home and fulfill traditional roles. A term for the traditional female is called "marianismo". Women are expected to be "submissive, obedient, dependent and to remain a virgin until marriage" (Paniagua, 1994, p. 40). Women are also expected to devote their time to cooking and cleaning the house . . . . Luisa clashed with these expectations.

Luisa was very athletic and she told us she wanted to play soccer but no one supported this at home. In the home were two uncles that worked many hours. Their wives and toddlers lived there too and expected Luisa to help with the children. Here was a difficult situation . . . do we impose our values onto this family? We, as middle-class American mothers, ran our kids to activities like, swimming, Girl Scouts, karate, etc. Even if the grandmother allowed it there was no one in the family to transport her. We were later told the uncles didn't have drivers' licenses. They didn't want to take the risk of driving anywhere but to work and back.

Soon after first approaching us, the grandmother came back to the school for help again. Her granddaughter, who had been missing until late at night, was dropped off by a much older male. We suggested joining a soccer league and the Boys and Girls Club. In addition to this, the high school counselor was contacted to set up a Hispanic female mentor to visit Luisa during her lunchtime once a week. A program called Lifeline was contacted which had activities once a week for at-risk kids, but due to its Protestant roots the grandmother was not in favor of this. We contacted the local Catholic deacon involved in Hispanic outreach to see if there was a youth group there. He said the Hispanic youth group had disbanded temporarily until they found a safer place to meet. Gang recruits had infiltrated the last location.

The school set up a visit to the local juvenile detention center to show where gang activities and incorrigibility led minors. We consulted our school's DARE Officer to setup a system for the grandmother to call for assistance in case her granddaughter ran away again. We taught the grandmother the word "runaway" and since the authorities could tell where the call was coming from, no more language was necessary. Also, the grandmother and Luisa made a contract that allowed for the child to play outside the home and detailed what repercussions there would be if she did not obey her curfew.

Luisa's grandmother continues to have problems accepting Luisa's desire to play sports and her "unladylike" behavior. Her grandmother allows a school volunteer to transport her to her soccer games. It is all she talks about at school. Her identity will hopefully be swayed more towards positive sports teams rather than the affiliation with a gang, but this will only happen with help from volunteers in the community.

Pepela's Theme: curanderas, importance of personal relations with families

Pepela's father was awarded custody of her after his American girlfriend was ruled unfit to care for her. Soon after, his wife and other children that were living in Mexico for the five years he was working here, joined him. They found it difficult to accept this new family member. Pepela was clean, fed and sheltered, though we were wondering if some of her negative social reactions were due to attachment problems stemming from her family history.

When Pepela came to school one day with scratch marks on her arms, the school counselor was alerted. The counselor was aware that although child physical abuse is what we were all concerned about knowing her family status, we could not rule out the practice of *curanderismo.* A call was made to Child Protective Services to investigate and it was not related to us whether the scratches were due to intentional harm or folk healing.

*A curandero (*or *curandera* if female*)* is a folk healer that uses the power of God to cure someone of a physical, mental, or behavioral problem. They are different from *brujos* that we would call "witch doctors". *Curanderos* and *brujos* are common in Mexico and some of their ways of healing are continued here by immigrants. Marks that mimic child abuse may be a result of trying to drive out evil spirits or a fever. These include *ventosas* which is also known as "cupping". This method tends to leave circular red spots the size of a cup's rim. Scarification, or small cut marks may also be made. Both methods are alternative medical practices for problems like congestion (Hansen, 1997, p. 119).

Appearance of burns could be from materials that are applied to a problem area using the "hot-cold Hispanic disease concept" (Hansen, 1997, p. 120). A material that can cause what appears to be abusive burns is called "rue". Hansen (1997) claims this is used "to treat the Hispanic folk illnesses *mal ojo* (evil eye) and *empacho* (presumed intestinal blockage)" (p. 121). Zuniga (1992) identifies *mal ojo* as the belief that a problem is caused by "excessive admiration or desire on the part of another. Mothers may isolate their children for fear of having one become victim of *mal ojo"* (p. 166) and (see Paniagua, 1994, p. 39). Other terms used in *curanderismo* are *susto* (fright), which causes certain symptoms, and *mal puesto*, an evil hex or illness willingly put on someone (Zuniga, 1992, p. 166).

Getting to know families of students is very helpful to avoid embarrassing situations. It is helpful to know whether traditional practices such as *curanderismo* would be something practiced in the home; it is also good to be aware of the family dynamics. For example, we were given a note to translate for Pepela's parents. It was addressed to her father and the American mother that had abandoned her. Had Pepela's stepmother intercepted this she may have been uncomfortable since she was the one fulfilling the role as mother. The father in this traditional household was the authority figure, it was appropriate to address the note to him only.

David's Theme: An academic success

David's father speaks English and Spanish fluently. His father attends school functions and parent-teacher conferences as the mother speaks only Spanish. David's parents read to him each night, which exposes him to rich language. There are books in the home that David can thumb through at anytime. This was different from most Mexican homes because books were expensive in their native country and there weren't many children's books in the stores or school libraries (e.g. Shih, 1994). We noticed in homes we visited that any books in the home were treasured and put away for safekeeping. In David's house there were children's books lining a whole shelf to which the children had access.

David's mother can stay home to raise their children and may converse more with the children as TV use is kept at a minimum. According to Tim Boals, Bilingual/ ESL Consultant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, who trained our ESL staff in CALLA methods, having a strong basis in the child's first language helps them to succeed in any additional languages. As one of our quickest at language acquisition, David went from a Level 1 English speaker on a language assessment test to a Level 5 after one school year. Notes his father has sent to school are in eloquent Spanish that signifies a strong education. He writes in English as well.

It appears they promote education in their home. This family also has the economic means to have books and the time to support educational activities. In this situation, David has soared.

II.A.
The Process of Acculturation

Culture- *The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions and art, from one generation to the next. (The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 1993, p. 415)*

It is important to be aware of the psychological adaptations our immigrant families may be going through as they adjust to a new culture. Most have made the choice to move here "voluntarily". A term one advocate in the community uses to describe members of our Hispanic community is "economic refugees", as their choices were to live in poverty or to come to the United States. There are those who have made this risky and difficult journey that would love to be back "home" if the means to support their families were there. (e.g. Miller, 1999) Some who have moved here do go back once they have earned enough money to pay a debt or purchase a home or car. Many of our families stay.

At Chamberlain about half of our language minority students were born in the

United States. The other half are from various locales in Mexico (See Chart A). Also since Chamberlain is an "at-risk " school with 68% of the students on the free and reduced lunch and tuition program, we assume many of our students live at or near poverty (See Chart B). The stresses of poverty may make those going through the process of acculturation have a more difficult time with basic needs due to the lack of English spoken, the poor conditions of the housing for rent in Chamberlain's district, under-education of some of the parents and stretched budgets as well as weather adaptations.

Whether our immigrants are long or short-term residents, their acculturation into the United States may have included an experience termed "culture shock". Culture shock was a term derived by Oberg in 1960 to cover six facets a person may experience when in a new culture:

1. *Strain* due to effort of psychological adaptations
2. *A sense of loss* in regard to friends, status, profession and possessions
3. Being *rejected* by or rejecting members of the new culture
4. *Confusion* in role expectations, self-identity, feelings and values
5. *Surprise, anxiety, or disgust* after becoming aware of cultural differences
6. *Feelings of impotence* due to not coping with environment

(Oberg, 1960, in Furnham & Bochner, 1989, p. 48)

Many researchers have expanded or altered this concept. Another popular way to show the psychological process of acculturation is by the U-curve of adjustment (e.g. Pedersen, et. al., 1989, p. 220) which shows a progress through three stages: *elation and optimism; frustration, depression, and confusion* (this stage has the characteristics of the six facets above); and a "*gradual improvement leading to feelings of confidence and satisfaction with the* new *society*" (Furnham and Bochner, 1989, p. 13).

Researchers see culture shock as a normal reaction, as part of the routine process of adaptation to cultural stress (Furnham and Bochner, 1989). Some Americans may complain when immigrants have enclaves or don't "act like Americans while in America." This small-mindedness might come undone when one goes to a foreign country and experiences first-hand the reactions of culture shock. There may be more of an understanding when we see immigrants socializing with people who are like them or when we see that their homes are graced with Spanish television programs, the music of their culture, and the foods. They are all a great comfort when in a situation where one has lost familiar ways to conduct themselves. Many Americans that work or study overseas savor meeting people they can chat with in English, reap comfort from seeing a U.S. television show or reading an English language newspaper. Although a normal reaction, the mental distress of culture shock is more acute for some immigrants than others dependent on various factors.

The process of internalizing a host culture's identity is termed "acculturation". The stages of cultural identity development as outlined by Sue (1989) begins with "conformity". In this stage one may deny that they belong to the minority group that they do. This stage may include racial self-hatred and feeling ashamed about one's ethnic identity. Furnham & Bochner (1989) describe a similar syndrome and use the term "passing" and qualify it's effects on an individual as "loss of ethnic identity" and "self-denigration" (p. 25).

We have students with first generation immigrant parents that insist their child only speak English. They want their children to fit into the new culture by giving up this aspect of their first culture, because some are afraid it will hinder their absorption of English or confuse the child. These are students that may speak a "fossilized" English since their parents aren't English proficient yet only communicate to their children in that language. This may result in "marginal" students caught between two cultures where they lose proficiency in Spanish and don't gain it in English.

The second stage of cultural identity development described by Sue (1989) is "dissonance". After denying any positive aspects of one's culture, one starts to see and accept a growing pride toward their roots.

"Resistancy/inversion" is the third stage (Sue, 1989). Here the ethnic majority are seen as oppressors. The person may feel anger at the guilt and shame they have felt about their ethnic identity. In our school environment, are the Anglo teachers and administration seen as members of a society that want to gear the Hispanic students toward the "right" way to have Anglo values? One of our researchers counseled a Hispanic middle school student that seemed to be in this stage. Did they see her as someone who was trying to "fix" them to be more like a middle class Anglo? Were they more likely to become involved in a Latino gang in this stage? As an adolescent, were they more likely to express "resistancy" as they may have been struggling to define their self-identity as well as ethnic identity? Another term used to describe a similar state is "exaggerated chauvinism"; it is "when some individuals react to second-culture influences by rejecting them" (Furnham & Bochner, 1989, p. 30.)

Next comes the stage of "introspection". Here a person realizes how much time and energy they have wasted on hatred. They move into channeling that energy toward learning about their selves and their culture instead. Perhaps this could be experienced by a person that participates in a folkloric dance group or chooses to do a report on a famous Hispanic American. From what I hear at school, many of our children are proud of being Mexican-- especially when they see the flag of Mexico or are talking about things unique to their country; for example, *quinceanera* celebrations, traditional food, the area their family comes from, or national soccer teams.

The final stage discussed by Sue (1989) is "integrated awareness". The family

may retain their traditions and culture, but befriend people of both their own and the majority ethnic group without a sense of inferiority. Furnham and Bochner (1989) have a similar categorization termed "mediating persons". The effect on society when people are able to actualize this stage is "inter-group harmony, cultural preservation, and pluralistic societies" (p. 25).

There could be an argument over a generalized trait that is attributed to Mexicans called "fatalism". A definition of this term would be the "generalized expectation that outcomes are determined by forces such as powerful others, luck or fate" (Furnham and Bochner, 1989, p. 167). Furnham and Bochner (1989) report that:

> . . . specific groups are prone to fatalistic beliefs--and it has been argued that certain cultural traditions, such as that of Mexico (Ross et al, 1983), are particularly associated with those beliefs--it might be expected that they would cope particularly badly with geographic movement (p. 167).

These authors state that fatalistic beliefs are associated with passive orientation, impaired coping strategies and psychological distress. There are arguments to the contrary, stating that fatalistic beliefs are very good for adapting, that the acceptance of things allows for a lower rate of depression (Furnham and Bochner, 1989, pp. 169-170).

Depressing evidence in a study on several generations of immigrants found that there was a "negative effect of time in the United States on educational achievement and aspirations . . . Comparisons of first, second, and third generations reveal progressively greater prevalence of single parenthood as well as welfare receipt among the poor (Jensen and Chitose, 1997, p. 61). The acculturation process can take generations and may not be a positive experience. At an ESL workshop, Tim Boals stated a contributing factor to poor school performance of second generation immigrants is that rich oral traditions have been replaced by lower level TV language and fossilized English skills. This affects academic language skills. We want to accept the challenge of countering this trend.

Studies on Children and Immigration "entremundos: between two worlds"

Studies have shown that immigrant children have an easier time adapting to a new environment because they are more malleable and more exposed to the new culture through the school system (Coll and Magnuson, 1997, p. 91). Younger children may have "milder and shorter grief reactions compared to adults" (Coll and Magnuson, 1997, p.100).

Although the children may have an easier time acculturating, it is still stressful to various extents. As Ashworth (1982) described, 'Children can be deeply disturbed

by the sudden loss of beloved relatives and friends; they may long for the familiar sights, sounds, and smells of the past" (Coll and Magnuson, 1997, p. 99). Some of our children have had extended separations from parents such as when they are left with relatives in Mexico for months or years while their parents are working up in the U.S. When these children are reunited through immigration, they may be affected in a negative manner as they have to also readapt to their family dynamics.

Children's stress responses are also dependent upon how the parent is coping. If the parent is having a difficult time it makes it "difficult for parents to be as supportive to their children as they might otherwise be and as the child might need for optimum development" (Atheay and Ahearn, 1991 as quoted in Garcia Coll and Magnuson, 1997, p. 101). The fear of deportation for illegal immigrants add to the stress and the family's ability to provide emotional support for their children. (Garcia Coll and Magnuson, 1997, p. 101).

"A mother's self-esteem in combination with poverty has also been negatively associated with a child's academic and behavioral adjustment" (Dubow & Luster, 1990 as quoted in Siantz, 1997, p. 152). Hispanic mothers usually establish the rules for right and wrong according to Eager (p. 53). If this is disrupted, the child may lack direction. An active role in their child's school is one way a mother's self-esteem can be raised.

Language acquisition can be a major stress for students. A few of our students have mentioned "*Me da pena*" (I am embarrassed), when asked why they don't try to speak in English more. Baptiste (1987, 1993) points out that children fearing the stigmatization of an accent are very invested in learning the language quickly. (in Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997, p. 111). Garcia Coll and Magnuson (1997) add that not only do immigrants have the pressure to learn the language and risk being ridiculed by peers while they do so, but the immigrants must also "learn how to communicate with people in a nonverbal way; children must learn how to read expressions and gestures and to understand intonations of the new language" (p. 110).

A few students may get in trouble for not looking a teacher in the eye while being reprimanded, but as a sign of respect, Hispanic children are taught to keep their eyes downcast when being scolded rather than looking the adult straight in the eye. (e.g. Eager, p. 52 and Paniagua, 1994, p. 39)

School / Community Awareness

"Well if you ask me, I think 'they' should all learn English." This is a comment we hear when talking about our Mexican families with some Anglos in the surrounding communities. In addition to that, we hear other culturally-biased comments which could actually be fear reactions. It is feared that jobs will be taken by others that will accept less, it is feared that welfare money is going towards

"outsiders", it is feared that we may need to learn how to step out of our own comfort-zone and accommodate others' ways.

The severity of culture shock felt by our immigrants may be attributed to the host environment. Boekestijn (1984) notes characteristics that a community, like ours, may exhibit:

1. Territoriality- (host culture protects and defends territory)
2. Ethnocentrism- (host culture looks with contempt at outsiders)
3. Competitiveness- (host culture feels competition from other groups)
4. Positive identity- (host culture assumes a need for positive identity)
5. Shunning of dissimilarity- (host culture's reactions to differences)
6. Search for control- (host culture's requirement for people to accept its belief and value systems to ensure predictability and control)
7. Interaction fatigue- (extent to which members of a culture experience fatigue and shun members of other groups)
8. Cultural heterogeneity and tolerance- (extent through which culture legally or illegally ensures or eschews cultural heterogeneity.)

[phrases in parenthesis are my summaries](Furnham and Bochner, 1989, p. 230).

It is important for us to review how our community and we react to our immigrants. Casas and Vasquez (1989) add that "when acculturation occurs in an environment lacking relevant support networks from among family, teachers, friends, and counselors, it can and often does create conflict, stress, and loss of self-esteem" (in Pedersen, et. al., 1989, p. 164).

In working with our Hispanic families, we will be less likely to feel afraid of how to act in our encounters if we follow the following advice from Sue (1989): recognize our culture- bound values, our class-bound values and be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication styles.

The lack of language proficiency is often related to serious misunderstanding, which can lead to disrupted interpersonal relations (Axelson, 1999). Goshen Community Schools has done a superb job in offering Spanish translators for messages from the school to home, for Special Education testing and for conferences with Spanish-speaking parents. English as a Second Language support is offered in each school for children who have not tested as fluent English speakers. Adults are offered three different levels of free English classes two nights a week in Chamberlain Elementary School. The GED program at Chamberlain incorporates Spanish speakers.

Persons five years and over that speak Spanish is 7.52% of the U. S. population, about half of those polled speak English less than "very well" (Axelson,

1999). Teachers may feel handicapped when they can't communicate with a parent, but translating support is available for them largely due to migrant grants in the Goshen School system. Verbal communication is smoother, but non-verbals can work to some success. Gesturing, a good attitude and facial messages convey an attempt to understand each other. At times our students must have the responsibility of translating for their parents, but this is discouraged as it shifts family dynamics and the child may not be interpreting adult conversation correctly.

Some people in the community used to believe the myth that Hispanic workers are "incompetent" or "lazy". Production managers in surrounding industries have been vocal as to how much they appreciate the long hours, pay and conditions that their Hispanic employees will tolerate to boost production. (e.g. Miller, 1999) Some persons in the community have an economic fear that the Hispanic workers are taking jobs from U.S. citizens, but area companies debunk that myth. Richard Marquis of Cir-Kit, Inc. in Goshen states: "If you pulled however many (Latinos) there are out of Elkhart County there's no way we could fill the jobs. There's (sic) jobs and there's (sic) not enough people to go around" (Miller, 1999). Companies may have had to move to other areas if it weren't for the supply of labor helped by the Latino population (e.g. Miller, 1999).

Attitudes are changing as the positive impact of our immigrant Hispanic population is witnessed. To facilitate progress, Sue (1989) recommends revamping one's attitude. For example, the high dropout rate with Hispanics may not be due to their not being motivated; rather, it is due to their experience with racism and unfairness. According to our experience, we would like to add another factor that may contribute to a high dropout rate: a lack of quality academic language support during their education whether from ineffective teaching strategies and/or a lack of educational resources and experiences in the home. We may need paradigm shifts to alter teaching methods to fit ones that have shown success in research. This may include more cooperative learning experiences. The pre-teaching of concepts is encouraged as this allows a student to familiarize themselves with a concept that will eventually be presented in class. This enhances self-esteem rather than always having to see the ESL teacher for "mopping-up" what a child was unable to master in class.

Sue (1989) points out that in the Hispanic and Asian cultures it may be more fitting to ask "How's your family?" as opposed to the Anglo greeting of "How are you?" Eager reminds us that "it is arriving on time that is considered rude" when seen from the prospective of an ethnicity that does not follow punctuality as some ethnicities do (p. 53). Many of our families have adjusted their concept of time to fit our expectations although this has meant incorporating a new value system for time that was irrelevant, if not impolite to enforce, in their lives before.

In working with people from another ethnic group that is also economically disadvantaged a priority would be to make sure there's food, shelter and work. (e.g.

Sue, 1989) After that it may be more appropriate to explore why they won't do their homework.

Zuniga (1992) offers some suggestions for appropriate conduct with most people that fit into the Hispanic culture group: She states it is inappropriate to not speak to the husband before the wife when both are present as well as not asking whether a father would be in agreement with a decision if he is not present at the meeting. Zuniga (1992) states it is also inappropriate to decline a food or beverage offering. There was only one home out of many that we felt uncomfortable in accepting food. However, this situation was not typical of the homes of most of our ESL students. They have impressed us with the immaculate conditions in the vast majority of our immigrants' homes and the wonderful aromas of dinner cooked from "scratch". Many of our immigrant households do not own modern timesaving devices like washers and dryers or microwaves so maintaining such cleanliness and finding the time and energy to cook meals that aren't prepackaged is a feat they accomplish.

To promote interethnic relations in a school setting, Verma, Zec and Skinner (1994), observed:

> ~Schools that had incorporated a policy on biased behavior and mutually respectful behavior were perceived by teachers and students as having better quality relationships, or at least the absence of conflict.
> ~Ethnic representation on the school staff was perceived as valuable, but not if their presence was perceived as marginal staff members.
> (in Axelson, 1999, p. 216)

Suggestions for schools in Axelson (1999) included: "Keep children mixed in as many activities as possible" (p. 219) and "Work against the self-fulfilling prophecy that minority children will fail. Work for the success of all children. Be patient and take the positive attitude that your hard efforts will pay off (p. 220).

We have also tried to pay attention whether assessment instruments we are using are culture-specific or not.

II.B.
Hispanic Parent Involvement in the Education Process

Research has shown that one of the most promising ways to increase students' achievement is to involve their families.
(Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995, p.1)

Overwhelmingly, Hispanic parents want their children to do well in school. Research by Herbert Wahlberg (1984) found that family participation in education was twice as predictive of academic learning as family socio-economic status (cited in

Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995, p. 1). We wanted to look into how we could nurture that relationship. We wanted to know why what seemed to be a lack of support from home was not actually due to a lack of interest.

Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) report that barriers to parental involvement in schools include some parents' beliefs that their role is to "provide for the child's basic needs as well as instilling respect and proper behavior. They see the school's role as instilling knowledge . . . one should not interfere with the job of the other" (p. 1). Most have deep respect for the teacher. Some parents are poorly educated themselves and tend to honor the teacher as the master of the learning process (Jeffers and Hutchinson, 1995, p. 41). Other barriers include language (lack of bilingual staff), past negative experiences with schools or a view that the school is a bureaucracy controlled by non-Hispanics (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995, p. 1). Some Hispanic parents are inhibited by their "lack of economic resources and feelings of being less than- instead of "different" from, the mainstream population" (Jeffers and Hutchinson, 1995, p. 41).

Education in Mexico

We looked into articles about education in Mexico to gain an understanding of what may have been the experience for some of our students' parents. We thought seeing the role of education in Mexico would help us in considering another paradigm from which to view education's role in our families. We surveyed families and spoke with teachers that had visited schools in Mexico as well as interviewed a Mexican teacher that immigrated here.

According to our survey, most parents have completed less than nine years of schooling (see Chart C). Some survey comments said that teachers were strict and induced corporal punishment for such things as messy handwriting.

"*Bien educado*" or "well-educated" in the Hispanic interpretation means well-behaved rather than a person with high academic skills. One of the worst insults a parent can receive is to be told that their child lacks courteous behavior and good manners. (e.g. Eager, p. 52 and Paniagua, 1994, pp. 39-40) Also, when a parent mentions that their children aren't being well-educated in school they could mean that they don't feel that the school is teaching respectful behavior. (e.g. Eager, p. 52)

In the 1993-94 school year, Mexican schools were required to be open 200 days out of the year for four hours a day five days a week (Flores, p. 45). In some secondary schools the children go to school in one of two shifts. The morning shift, being a more popular time of day, may have 40-50 students in a class, whereas in the afternoon there may be 16 students to a classroom. Accessibility or ability to get to school may be more difficult in some areas as Shih (1994) states that only 69% of the people in the south over the age of 15 are literate and the illiteracy rate is as high as 100% in some rural and indigenous areas, while in the north, literacy rates are 95%

(p. 12). Most of our Mexican-born students were from central Mexico, it is only documented through anonymous surveys the years of schooling their parents had. Also most of those who filled out the surveys did so themselves and could read and write. A handful of our parent surveys were done orally.

Education and Families

A study done of parental views toward education in third world countries showed that education contributes immeasurably to the pride and the sense of worth of the learners (Baker, 1989, p. 5). Mexican parents from four different villages were asked in one study by Brooke and Oxenham: "What are the advantages of sending your children to school?" and "Why is it worthwhile keeping your child in school?" The majority of the parents in all the villages gave answers which could be summed up "for its own sake" rather than "for progress", "for work" or "for continuing studies" (Baker, 1989, p. 2). The authors concluded in that study that preparing the children to deal with the world was a more salient function of the school than qualifying them for modern-sector employment (Baker, 1989, p. 3). This was congruent with another study of Mexican school drop-outs which revealed that:

> ...while parents do attach much importance to getting an education in general, gaining the certificate is not their primary concern- rather learning to read, write and do arithmetic. For these parents, education is not for financial advancement, as there are no differences to be detected between the socio-economic situations of those who dropped out and those who stayed on (Baker, 1989, p. 4).

We must remember that allowing a child to pursue an education in a village may have meant the loss of a farmhand. Also buying school clothes, pens and notebooks is a large investment for those in disadvantaged regions (Baker, 1989, p. 1). School functions in Mexico often require parents to pay money they may not have. In Goshen, a sixteen-year-old in school is someone who could help contribute to the family's income by working full-time. We knew of a thirteen-year-old brought up from Mexico to babysit younger siblings here and did not attend school until discovered by authorities. Our students are not at school some days as they are needed by family for babysitting or to interpret at the banks, doctors offices, or even the courts. Education is important to most parents, yet poverty or language barriers may not allow the child to attend as often as we want them to or leave them enough time to do homework (e.g. Axelson, 1999, p. 221).

In U.S. Bureau of the Census data from 1996, only about 50% of the Hispanic population over the age of twenty-five in the United States had earned a high school

diploma as compared to about 80% of the White population (in Axelson, 1999, p. 209). The dropout rate for Hispanic students in Goshen mirrors the national dropout rate of about 50%. This gave us the idea to survey the high school ESL classes as to what encourages them to remain in school while many immigrants drop-out or don't enroll (see Chart D).

If we want to do what we can to harness the support of parents for their child's education we can start by improving the feeling of being welcome into their children's school. Communication here is a vital point. Below are suggestions for creating communication links.

Reception areas should include bilingual staff (Jeffers and Hutchinson, 1995, p. 42). Currently in Chamberlain we get by with paging an ESL teacher, but most of the time this disrupts our teaching. If this is not economically feasible, ***posting bilingual volunteers at the school's doors before and after school*** to act as liaisons for parents and "humanize" the school was also recommended by Nicolau and Ramos' 1990 report. (p. 19) These greeters could inform parents that come to pick up their children of upcoming events or translate questions for the parents then. This service could be provided for a stipend and possibly organized through the ESL Department. If this is not a possibility, some schools ***have dry erase boards set by the entrance with announcements on them***. We could have a bilingual one.

Phone messages need to be bilingual. In Goshen, Parkside School has a greeting with instructions in both English and Spanish. We would recommend expanding this at our school to include an information line in Spanish to announce school closings, delays, and special activity information. Lines may already exist for such a service so as not to incur any additional expense.

Written material needs to be translated (although don't assume all families are literate) (see Jeffers & Hutchinson, 1995; Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). The ESL department is backlogged with translation requests. Currently we may simplify the translated version for promptness. A full-time translator for Goshen Schools would be recommended, but most teachers need notes home translated right away. Having a staff member in the building that can do this is much more efficient. They can translate corporation-wide notes in the main ESL department and send them out to all schools rather than each school spending time to translate picture day instructions, Camp Amigo forms, etc. Computer programs that have translations already on them have been convenient, although they aren't always as specific in content as to what the teacher wants to communicate to parents.

As far as written material home, Nicolau and Ramos (1990) found that mailings or flyers were not successful for every family. "Sometimes parents chose not to open letters from school. Such letters might contain bad news" (p. 22). Following up with a phone call or visit aided the intent of the letter. They recommended that if letters or flyers were to be sent home that they were appealing and non-intimidating.

Nicolau and Ramos (1990) have other suggestions to reach parents: ***make announcements at Sunday Spanish language church services*** (p. 19) There are several that we know of locally. Also relay information ***on local radio programs*** (e.g.. Nicolau & Ramos, 1990 and Eager). In Goshen, Jimmer and Zulma Prieto host a Saturday morning radio program in Spanish on 91.1, WGCS.

Develop parent networks. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) state that project coordinators for successful programs used parent-to-parent contacts. Parents could be responsible for informing a web of others of upcoming events or school procedures.

Calling parents on the phone is another means we have used to communicate with parents although not all families have telephones. We call to remind parents of parent-teacher conferences. We feel this boosts attendance as it clarifies the date, the time, what the meeting is for, and it emphasizes that it is important the parent attend.

Providing a small area at the school devoted to parent information like at Chandler is another ideal set-up to assist Hispanic parents. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) suggest stocking this room with applications and forms that relate to their needs, such as DMV, tax, and food stamp forms and voter registration forms (p. 28). This could be extended to include library card applications, Spanish-speaking outreach programs, etc.

Encouraging the parents to ***sit in on a classroom during school hours*** (e. g. Nicolau & Ramos, 1990, p. 29 and Latino Parents as Partners, 1994) may ease the mystery of what their child's day is like and to see what kind of subjects they are exposed to and what they are capable of doing.

Nicolau and Ramos (1990) said the strategy found most effective by 98% of project coordinators they polled was the personal approach. They define this as ***"talking face to face with the parents, in their primary language, at their homes, or at the school"*** (p. 20). Personal contact was deemed to be very important in most studies aimed at involving Mexican parents in the education of their children. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) called for contacting parents two to three times in order to relieve suspicion and start a relationship (p. 20). They stress that it is in these ***home visits*** that the school liaison can see who their parents are so they can have a successful program which involves parents. Answers to questions important in designing an effective home link are to find out what it's like in the home including: Are they single? On welfare? Who are the primary caregivers of the child after school? Are the neighborhoods safe? Is there someone at home that speaks English? Do they appear troubled? Does the male of the household let the mother go out alone (p. 20)? Nicolau and Ramos (1990) state, "The projects that took time to know their families were the ones that succeeded" (p. 21). Would the investment of time for the ESL teacher or regular classroom teachers in getting to know the parents be an efficient means to harness success for the student?

School Meetings

The first meeting parents attend at a school must be "warm, comfortable, profitable experience for the parent; otherwise the first meeting will be the last meeting they ever attend (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 22). Jeffers and Hutchinson (1995) echo that getting low-income Hispanic parents to the first school meeting is the hardest part of building a relationship (p. 41). Hispanic parents (as well as most other parents) don't like to be "talked at" in a punitive manner and may anticipate this is what the meeting will be like. It is scary for parents if they feel someone will be "making judgements about them" or "asking questions they won't be able to answer" (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 23).

Parent meetings that failed were ones which were loaded with serious information and tried to immediately integrate Hispanic parents that were there for the first time into committees (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 23). This integration should be a process that takes time to overcome "suspicion, fear and reluctance" (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 23). ***Opportunities to socialize at the meetings are an attractive aspect of school meetings***. Chamberlain's Ice Cream Social at the beginning of the year qualifies: not only do parents meet the teachers, tour the building, and socialize, but the meeting in the gym tends to be brief and light. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) and Jeffers and Hutchinson (1995) also recommend extending invitations to such school activities to extended family members that may live with the family.

Nicolau and Ramos (1990) declare that "school is not a place in which most low income Hispanic parents feel comfortable" (p. 23). Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) and Nicolau and Ramos (1990) also recommend ***having a parent meeting at a community center if it seems to be a less threatening site with transportation and child care provided***. One school's solution to parental discomfort with schools was to have their first parents' meeting at a local fast food restaurant with the school staff serving the food. In our area there are several churches and there will be a new Boys and Girls Club building in late 1999 that could be alternative meeting sites. Yet it seems Chamberlain already has a reputation as a community center and may be considered a comfortable meeting place. Another successful option would be to do what one school corporation did: ***they provided coffee and doughnuts to several parents who then hosted meetings at their homes with the school principal, nurse and counselor in attendance*** (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 23). Such small group interaction was found to be more comfortable for some parents (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, p. 29).

Various activities that fulfill a need will attract parents to the school. These include: ESL and Even Start classes (which Chamberlain houses); parent/teacher conferences (well-attended by Hispanic parents at Chamberlain, translators are provided); social events; community projects; workshops; parenting classes; informal workshops where topics are chosen by parents; homework centers and leadership training. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) found that regardless of the format,

participation levels were dependent upon flexibility of the meetings, how caring the environment was and consulting with parents as to what subjects in which they were interested.

In a Houston school district, they have found success with ***focus-group meetings*** where school officials and parents discuss issues like homework and career skills (Jeffers and Hutchinson, 1990, p. 41). Topics such as spouse and child abuse, teen pregnancy, drugs, how to fill out food stamp applications or childcare information (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990) might be requested at workshops. One helpful event Goshen's ESL summer program had was a health fair for families with screenings available.

Why go through all of this effort to include our Hispanic parents in their child's school? Nicolau and Ramos' report (1990) found that project coordinators found attitudes and behavior changed in once reluctant parents; for example, they asked about homework, were more cooperative with the school, visited the school for reasons other than for their child being in trouble, initiated communication with the school and were more vocal about their concerns. One Spanish-speaking parent that has recently become more vocal asked the ESL translator to help find a tutor for her child which we did with great success. She can be proud that she was a proactive part of her child's education. According to Nicolau and Ramos (1990), such "camaraderie between parents and teachers had a positive effect in building trust and mutual respect" (p. 33). Hispanic representation in the Parent-Teacher Organization may grow.

Nicolau and Ramos (1990) admit that the children of involved parents in their projects didn't show large academic gains as compared to the children of non-involved parents, but "their attitudes toward school, their participation in class, their behavior, and their study habits have improved markedly over those of their "non-project" peers" (p.33).

Another study done by the National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics found that:

> The most successful schools for Hispanics were those that had strong enduring links to the community they served and encouraged--indeed required--that parents become partners in teaching and learning. These schools had strong, dedicated principals who created an atmosphere of high expectations for teachers and students. These were the schools that also had a number of Hispanic teachers and larger numbers of Hispanic adults in guidance, monitoring and supervisory roles. They had close connections with the social service, health and recreational programs that serve their students and families. (Ascher, 1985, p. 4)

Chamberlain is well on its way to achieving such an environment. The principal has the qualifications mentioned above and speaks Spanish. Several teachers are bilingual and others are culturally aware, especially in respect to children from economically disadvantaged homes. Chamberlain houses recreational programs and is the site for the Boys and Girls Club through 1999 until it rebuilds a block away. A health clinic with a Spanish-speaking doctor is across the street and is used by many of our families. A recommendation would be for a Spanish speaker in the reception area or a social worker assigned to our school solely for translating and home visits.

In addition, treatments to help communicate with our Spanish-speaking families include a welcome video (see outline in Project Treatment C), refrigerator magnets with the school number and Spanish extension will hopefully be a possibility and an orientation in Spanish at the beginning of the school year with refreshments and babysitting to discuss snow days, importance of attendance, homework routines and services available at the school. The Goshen Public Library is willing to send personnel to our school's orientation to register families.

Chamberlain's practice of having report cards distributed at parent-teacher conferences is possibly one reason that the turnout is successful. In addition to this, the fact that we phoned to remind parents or stopped by some homes that didn't have a phone encouraged participation.

The other day a Hispanic woman entered our office asking for assistance. Her little girl had fallen down and hit her head. She didn't have a phone to call for help so she ran to the school. We provided her with a translator and called a doctor. Although she didn't have children enrolled in school yet we were in a convenient location and willing to help. Perhaps when her daughter enters kindergarten she will feel good about our school, which has open arms to embrace its community.

VII.
Theoretical Perspective

What is hoped to be a result of this project is twofold: on one hand to provide the receiving community with information from which they can reformulate their perception of the Hispanic immigrants, and on the other hand we would like to give suggestions to ultimately help our Hispanic children succeed in school. This stems from our perspective that advocacy is important in becoming multicultural counselors, teachers and members of the community.

By the year 2010, "racial and ethnic minorities will constitute the majority of the U.S. population" (Sue, 1992 in Peterson & Nisenholz, 1995, p. 385). In our "salad bowl" society, it is important to learn about other culture-group perspectives in order to enhance the well-being of all. We hope by making our school more culture-friendly by having bilingual modifications, by raising awareness and by integrating representatives of all our families that no one will be labeled "oppressed" or

"oppressor".

To move forward, the privileged culture group needs to learn about their own identity and how to deal with the guilt or defensiveness they feel being part of a group with a history as oppressors. To know one's own racial identity may mean to face "the fear related to the loss of rights, privileges, and status" (Pack-Brown, 1999, p. 89). They need to stretch beyond what may be their comfort zone to actualize the potential of a better society fairly inclusive of all groups.

Ideally, multiculturalism operates from a stage called "principled activistic disposition" a term used by D'Andrea & Daniels (1999) to describe people motivated to "work toward creating more caring, responsible, and just communities in our country" (p. 100). Pack-Brown (1999) also writes about a stage of advocacy called the immersion/emersion stage. Here a person may have grown enough in their identity work to "assist clients in coping more effectively with their experiences of racism" (p. 90). Some of our families experience racism by members of the community. We want to do our part as advocates to stand up for the Hispanic community's right to not be oppressed. Peterson & Nisenholz (1995) refer to "change agents" (p. 388). This term connotes someone who "may work to confront and modify institutional bureaucracies (p. 387)" and also may move others toward less racist, sexist and other discriminatory attitudes. (e.g. Peterson & Nisenholz, 1995) Our role in this project, we feel, qualifies us as "change agents."

Ethically, counselors, (and I would like to extend this to include school staff) would do best to follow the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. It states that those who have clients "from backgrounds different from their own to respect those differences; gain knowledge, personal awareness and sensitivity pertinent to these clients and incorporate culturally relevant practices into their work" (in Corey, 1996, p. 65).

A universal concern, optimally, of parents is to help their children grow in a way that they can best cope with their surroundings. Teachers and school counselors reap fulfillment by helping their students to learn and become socially well-adjusted. Enabling this to happen in a diverse world requires some proactive persons to educate others through multicultural awareness. Some people need to step out of their safe zone and take a stand against oppressive practices their culture group may practice. One may need to counter negative statements, jokes or unfair practices toward the population of Hispanics we have grown to care for. There may be discouraging moments when good intentions are met with negativity, challenges or disinterest from either side as they struggle with their racial identity issues. We hope that at least in the school environment our students sense respect, fairness and opportunity for all regardless of their ethnicity.

IV.
Project Evaluation

This project helped facilitate awareness and treatments to help incorporate the Hispanic families that make up 28% of our student body at Chamberlain. Although there seems to be several different areas touched upon, we felt they were all important things that we wanted to include. Also, one could always go more in depth, make more professional treatments, etc.; and though we strived for perfection, there will be those moments after completion when we may have wished we had added another treatment or bit of information.

It is hoped that the material presented is not offensive to anyone. Our purpose was to inform with positive regards about the people we serve and care about. Our project was to enhance the relationships between cultures through awareness of cultural traits with the understanding that such traits do not apply to everyone from that cultural group. People writing multicultural awareness articles may be criticized for stereotyping, we have done the best we could to avoid this without eliminating the fact that cultures have certain tendencies due to a history of influences and traditions that has affected their people.

Each team member had a talent to add and most important, a concern for our students as we all worked together in the English as a Second Language Program at Chamberlain School. We felt we started early enough and were good about documenting things for months that impressed us and related to our project. The one thing we wished we had done better was to interview each willing family orally to hear their rich stories and impressions. Most of our surveys were written, but the anonymity may have reflected how the parent more truly felt. The downside was it excluded those that were illiterate.

We believe our project will do an important job of helping our school staff to become more aware of the families we service, and we are confident the treatments will be a positive contribution to assisting our Hispanic families during their educational experience at Chamberlain and elsewhere.

V.
Significant Learnings

As persons that have come to care very much for the children we service, we realize there are some things that we can control and things we ultimately can't about their situations. This project has been therapeutic in the sense that we can begin to understand reasons for some behaviors that discouraged us. Also the treatments allowed for us to put energy into something that will help some families. We have placarded the "Serenity Prayer" in Spanish to our office wall and have two baskets in our room labeled "things we can't control" and "things we can control". When a child shows academic potential but is in a home that doesn't support this, we hesitate

to write this fact down and put it in the "things we can't control" basket; but in a few situations, after we've exhausted all avenues to get support from home, we know that child must get their educational support while outside the home only, and we pray that it will give them wings enough to fly.

Things we have learned from dealing with parents include:

~Be aware of which parents are English-speaking as dictated on registration forms Chamberlain uses for all families so as not to single out someone for needing a translator based on how they look or what their name is.

~Don't assume a parent can read the papers you present to them or that they can read books to their children in their native language.

~Don't assume all parents can sign their name with ease.

~Some parents cannot make it to school meetings although they'd like to and worry that teachers will think they're bad parents for not coming.

~Try and get a fluent translator so meetings are more productive.

~Call to remind families of parent-teacher conferences or stop by their homes.

~Be sensitive and remember to include some positive statements about children who may be having difficulties in school as the circumstances at home would be overwhelming for anyone:

--Some behavior can be due to sexual or physical abuse or the witnessing of it.

--Students may be sharing a room and/or caring for small children in the home that keep them awake or unable to do their homework.

--Not all children have a place to study or the equipment at home to do so.

--Some parents, no matter what ethnicity or economic status, may inflict corporal punishment after conferences bombarded with negativity.

--Although the child does have potential, their education may have been interrupted and they need some time to catch up. Language acquisition can take five to seven years; until then, a child may function two years lower in reading and writing.

VI.
Conclusion

We are imposing our values upon our Hispanic students by prioritizing academics. It is our desire for them to graduate because as teachers we want what we feel is the best for them from our perspective. We have not grown up in their culture that has different values that are as important to them as ours is to us. Family responsibilities that take precedence over school attendance, living in the present . . . such things that frustrate persons raised in an Anglo-American household are not "bad" things when looked at from another angle. When Americans move to foreign

countries, some of their habits are looked upon with abhorrence or as "wrong". We can try to encourage our Hispanic parents to feel a part of the education process, we can try to understand their culture and the process of acculturation that they are going through, but it will only succeed if we meet them as equals, if they feel the sense that we care for them as an integral part of our diverse community, and only if they want to assimilate in that way.

Casas and Vasquez (1989) state that "Hispanics in the United States experience second-class citizenship, oppression and discrimination to various degrees" (in Pedersen, et.al., 1989, p. 160). Given this sociohistorical reality, we want to push for an academic education as a means to counter this negative portrayal for succeeding generations.

We are encouraged by the fact that we have parents who face difficulties yet support their children's education. They may need a translator, but they don't let that get in the way of communicating with us. We have mothers that bring in an entourage of children to talk with a teacher when it would be so much easier just to stay home. We have parents that are working twelve hours a day and still need to go to the laundromat, grocery store and cook but will go a day without pay to make a conference. We have others who do all those things but can't take off of work because they transport four or five others who would have no way to get to work and would also lose a day's pay to accommodate their ride's conference so they send a student's sibling to conference with a teacher. We have a parent who regrets not living close to her family in Mexico, but she realizes the value of the educational opportunity for her children in Goshen.

On the other hand, we have parents we'd like to berate for what we think is a lack of interest or responsibility for their children. They may not qualify for Child Protective Services' attention but therapy in Spanish would benefit them. Unfortunately counseling can be costly, bilingual counselors are hard to find, and some people refuse to consider therapy .

We hope the added awareness we have provided in this paper, along with the compassion and advocacy we see the school staff has for their students will help the school-home link. For those very few families that have made it their decision not to make education a priority, we can know that we tried to impose our values; and with GED programs that Chamberlain provides, we're persistent about being there . . . just in case they eventually want to make it their priority too.

VII.
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The ESL teachers at Chamberlain Elementary are looking for ways to continually improve the communication between the parents and the school. Could you help us by participating in this informal survey? Feel free to add any comments. This is an anonymous survey. We greatly appreciate your help.

INFORMAL SURVEY FOR PARENTS

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1) Where did you attend school?

2) What did you like about school? What did you not like about your school?

3) What was your school like?

4) How was your school different from the ones here in Goshen?

5) How many years did you attend school?

6) Do you speak English?

7) Do you read and write English?

8) Do you read and write Spanish?

9) Do you have a radio? Do you listen to English or Spanish stations?

10) Do you watch television in English or Spanish?

11) Do you have a phone?

12) Do you have a VCR?

HOME EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

1) Do you read to your children or listen to them read?

2) Do you have a cassette player at home?

3) Do you listen to English cassettes?

4) Do you read Spanish books or listen to Spanish cassettes at home?

5) Do you have a Goshen Public Library card?

6) Do you know how to sign up at the library for a card?

7) Would you like information on this?

ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

1) Do you think your children will graduate from high school?

2) Do you want your children to attend college?

HOME / SCHOOL CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

1) Do you have time to read all the school notes in your child's backpack each day?

2) Do you have time to read over your child's homework each day?

3) If you have questions, do you feel comfortable going to school and asking them?

4) Have you ever attended a meeting with your child's teachers?

5) Was it at home or at school?

6) Was there an interpreter at the meeting?

7) Did you benefit from the meeting?

8) The school counselor has a parent library. If there were books or videos in Spanish on parenting, would you check them out?

9) If you are having problems in your family, our school counselor is available to help. Would you feel comfortable talking to the counselor if a interpreter was available?

10) Do you have any suggestions that would help us with the communication between the school and the parents?

Thanks for your help.

Mrs. Lyon and Ms. Rodgers
Chamberlain Elementary
534-2691

High School E.S.L. Student Survey

We teachers are interested in what helps students to feel and achieve success in school. We have a high drop-out rate in our school. Since you are a student who has stayed in school and has made a success of yourself, we would like you to write a paragraph explaining how you have been able to do this.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Snow Days

Los días de nieve

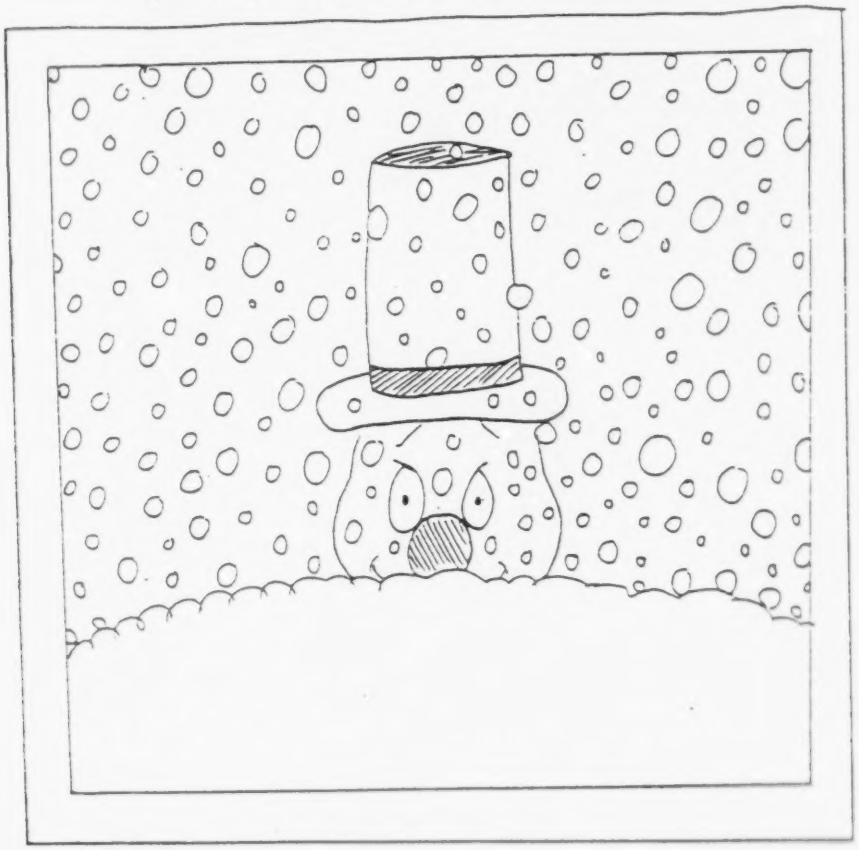
Written by: Mrs. Lyon
Illustrated by: Zach Castedo

Escrito por: Señora Lyon
Ilustrado por: Zach Castedo

Look outside!
All I see is snow!

¡Mira afuera!
¡Todo lo que veo es
la nieve!

WHITE, WHITE
EVERYWHERE!

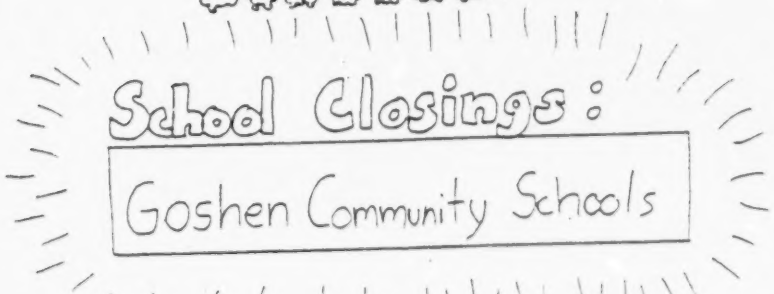


¡BLANCO, BLANCO
POR DONDEQUIERA!

I WATCH TV TO SEE IF WE HAVE SCHOOL.

MIRO LA TELEVISIÓN PARA VER SI HAY CLASES.

I WATCH FOR THE WORDS
"SCHOOL CLOSINGS"
AND
"GOSHEN COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS."



BUSCO LAS PALABRAS
"SCHOOL CLOSINGS"
·PARA SABER CUÁLES
ESCUELAS ESTÁN CERRADAS·
Y BUSCO "GOSHEN
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS."

YEAH!
THERE IS NO SCHOOL
TODAY!

¡QUÉ BIEN!
¡NO HAY CLASES HOY!

Now I can play in
the snow
all day!

¡Ahora puedo
jugar en la nieve
todo el día!

Note for parents:

When bad weather arrives in Goshen, sometimes the schools are closed. They will notify the television and radio stations by 6:30 A.M.

Please listen to these stations:

Goshen Radio: 1460 AM

WNDU - TV - CH. 16 / CABLE CH. 8

WSBT - TV - CH. 22 / CABLE CH. 12

FOX TV - CH. 28 / CABLE CH. 6

You will hear "Goshen Community Schools."

Sometimes there is a one or two hour delay. When school is delayed, there will be no breakfast. When school is delayed two hours, there will be no morning kindergarten.

****

Nota para los padres:

Cuando hace mal tiempo en Goshen, a veces cierran las escuelas y no hay clases. Notifican a las estaciones de la televisión y del radio del área a las 6:30 de la mañana.

Por favor, hay que escuchar a estas estaciones:

Goshen Radio: 1460 AM

Televisión:

WNDU - TV - CANAL 16 - CABLE 8

WSBT - TV CANAL 22 - CABLE 12

FOX TV - CANAL 28 - CABLE 6

Van a escuchar las palabras "School Closings"
y "Goshen Community Schools."

También, a veces empiezan las clases una hora o dos horas tarde. En caso de eso, van a escuchar estas palabras:
"school delay."

No hay desayuno cuando las clases empiezan tarde, y no hay kindergarten por la mañana cuando las clases empiezan dos horas tarde.

Birthplaces of ESL Hispanic Students

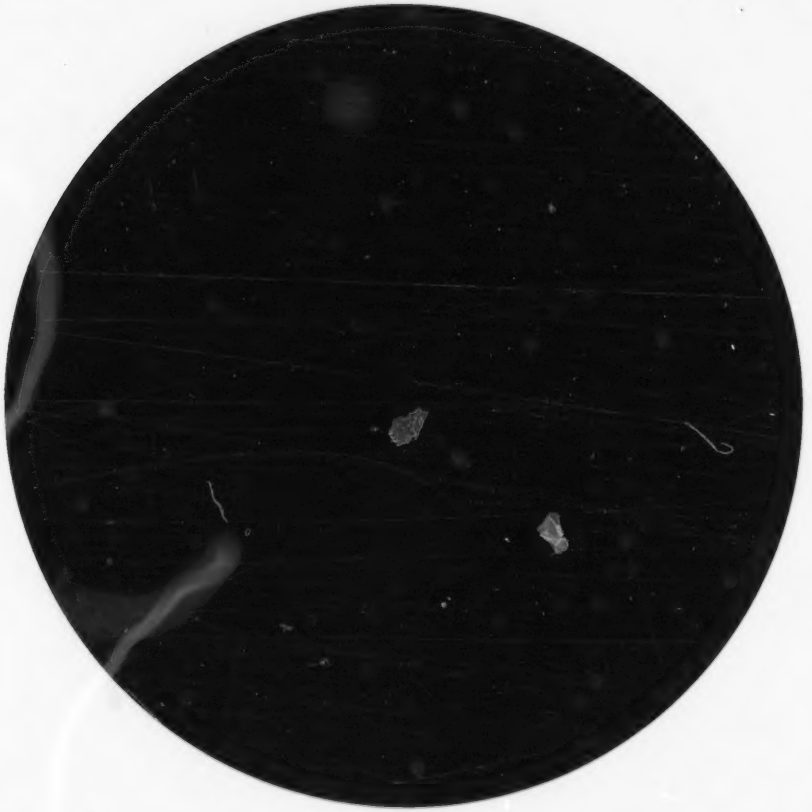


Chart A

Percentage of Chamberlain ESL Students that Qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch

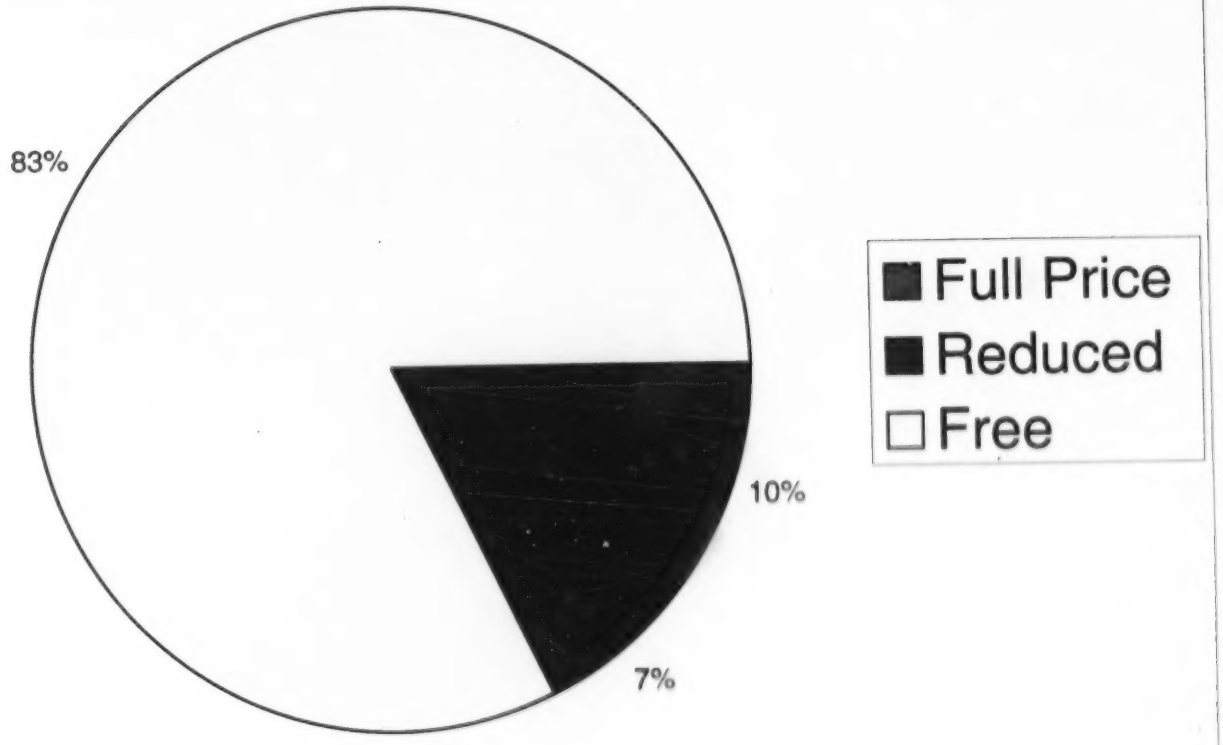


Chart B

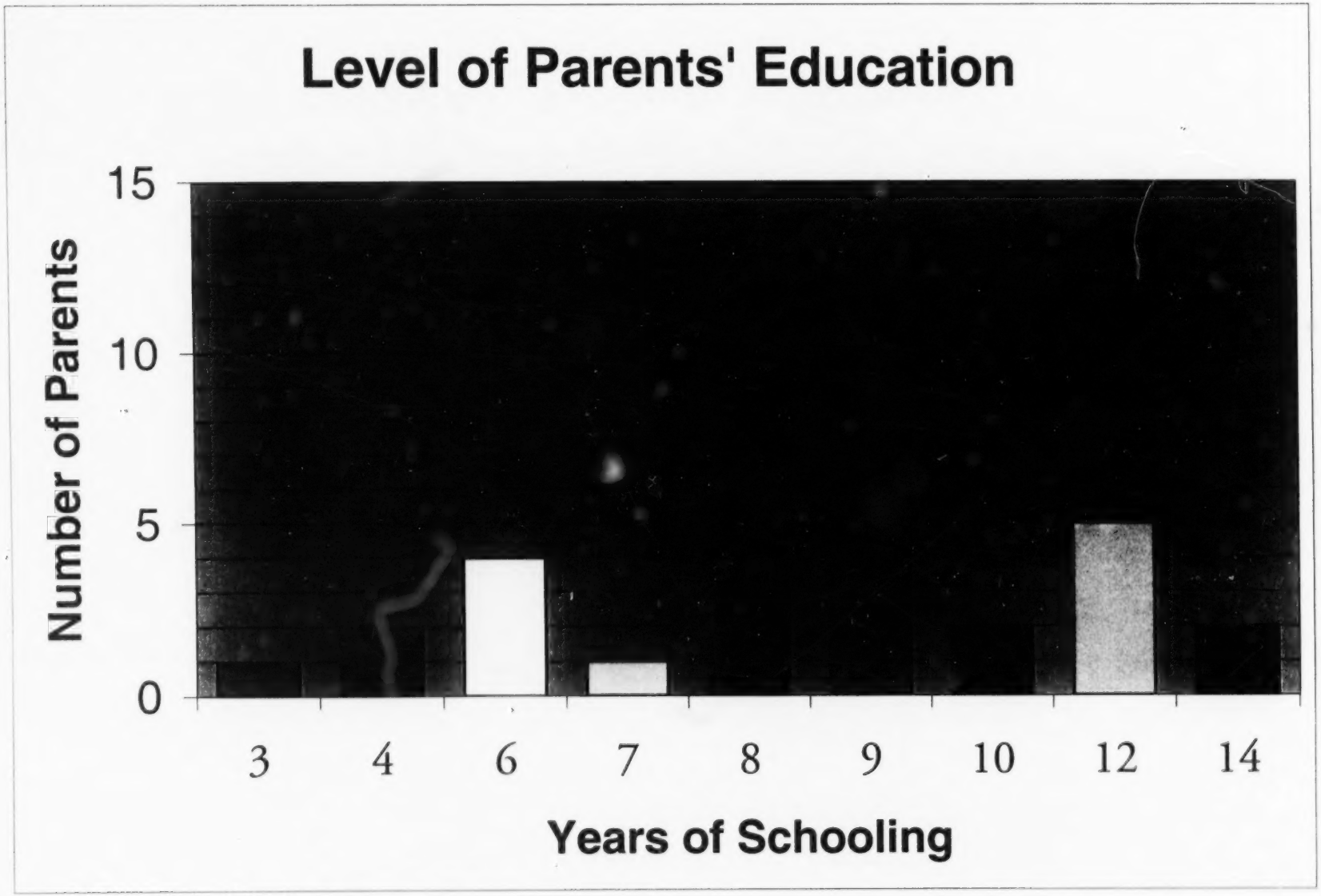
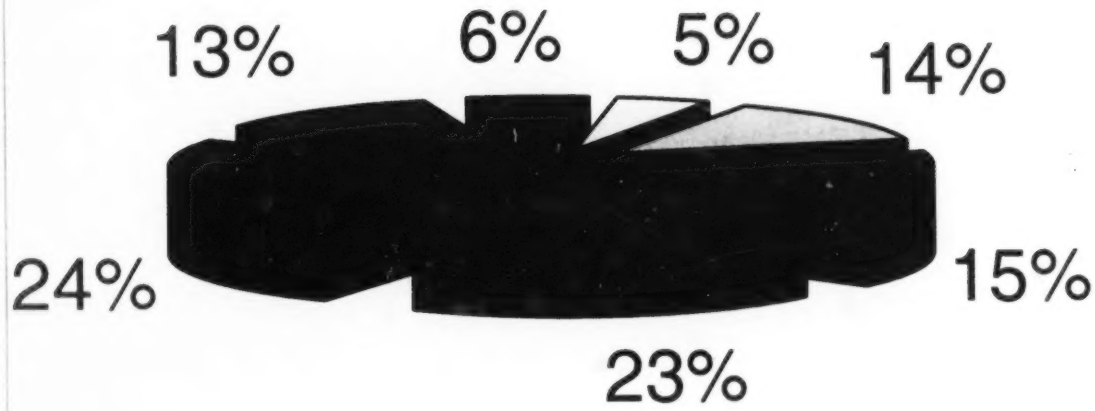

Level of Parents' Education
Number of Parents
15
10
5
0
3
4
6
7
8
9
10
12
14
Years of Schooling

Chart C

Results of ESL High School Student Surveys: Reasons Given for 'Staying in School'



- Misc.
- Learn More English
- Teacher's Encouragement
- "I want to Graduate"
- To Prove to Myself that "I can do it"
- Parents want them to Graduate
- Make more Money to Obtain Better Employment

Chart D

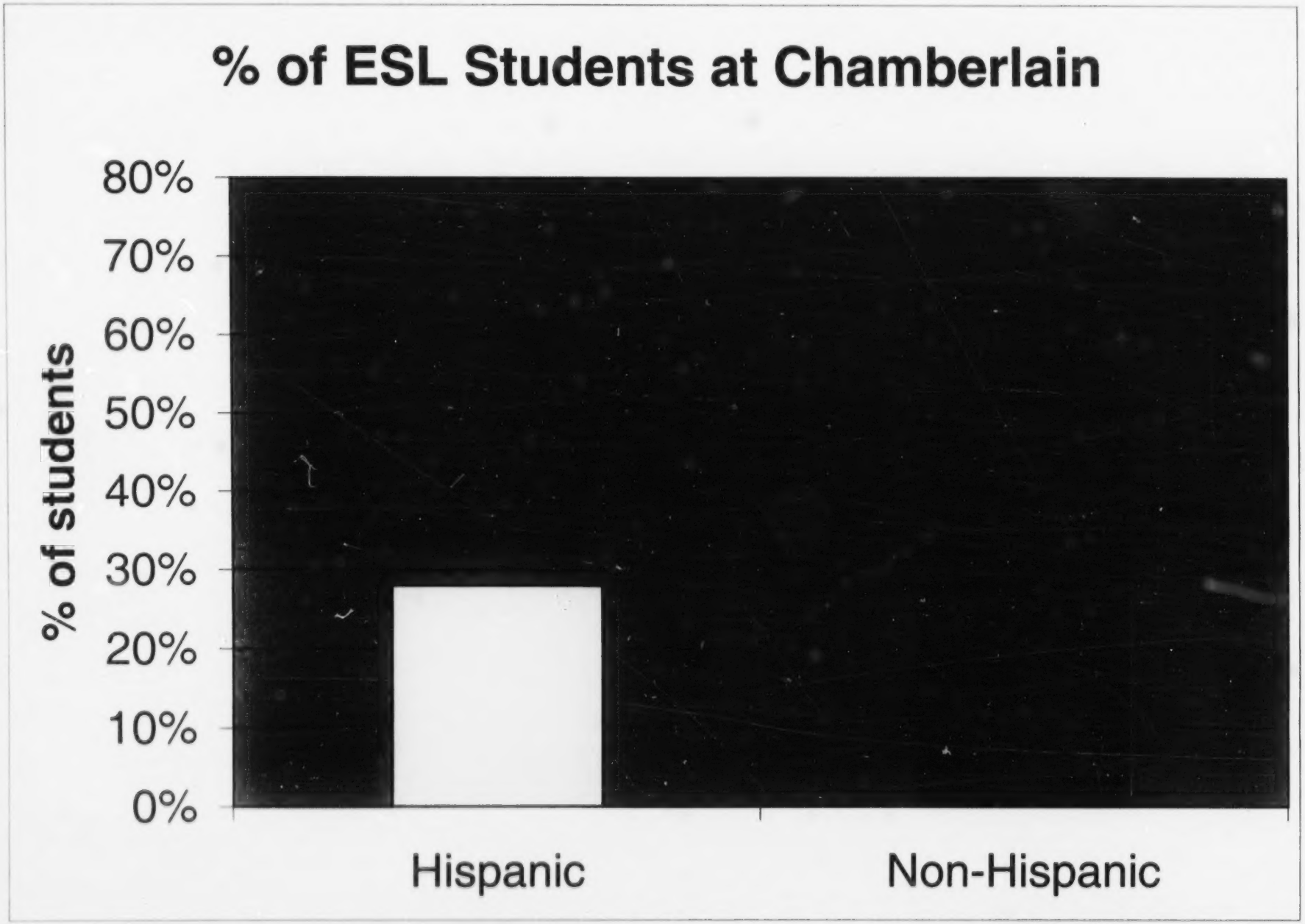

% of ESL Students at Chamberlain
% of students
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Hispanic
Non-Hispanic

Chart E